



England Records Beyond the Grave

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When our English ancestors passed away, records continued to be created after their death. Among these records include probate records, burial records, monumental inscriptions, death duty records, death certificates, cemetery registers, and newspapers. Many of these records can be found online, while others are available at the Family History Library or other repositories.

TYPE OF RECORDS AT DEATH AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

PROBATE RECORDS: (Beginning pre-1500s)

Wills are among the earliest records and are valuable because they were recorded even before church records and may contain family relationships connecting one generation from the next. While the wealthy were more likely to have left a will, one did not need to have a lot of money to leave one. They are well indexed and are being digitized online.

Finding Probate Records from 1400s to 1857:

wiki.familysearch.org

From the late-1400s to 1857, FamilySearch includes indexes and original images of the will.

1. In the Search, type the name of the County and add the word probate. I.e. "*Warwickshire Probate*," or "*Yorkshire Probate*," then click the link.
2. On the County probate page, using the alphabetical table, find the parish where your ancestor died and then click the link to the Primary Court.
3. Under the *Index* section, determine if there are any county indexes that can be searched. These may or may not be digitized.
4. After searching the index, on the County probate page, scroll down to the *Records* section.

Determine if the Family History Library has a link to the original will or not. Many of these have been digitized which is indicated by a camera icon. 📷 If not available online or in the Family History Library, a link to the archive location should be available.

Content:

- Name of the deceased.
- Possible family members including spouse, children, siblings, parents, nieces/nephews, etc.
- Name of executors,
- Inventory of personal items bequeathed.
- Inventory of estate items.

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk>

1. Click *Search*, then *A-Z of record sets*.
2. In the Search box type *Probate*.

Finding Probate Records from 1858 to the present:

www.familysearch.org/search

1. Scroll down to *Find a Collection*, under the world map, and in the search box type "National Index."
2. After you search the index and find your ancestor, record the date of probate and the place of probate in order to find the original will. Note: In the online index, the "Beneficiary's Name," is really the executor/executrix, not the beneficiary.

www.ancestry.com \$ – Indexes from 1858-1966; 1973-1995

1. Go to *Search*, then click *Browse Card Catalog*.
2. In the Keyword(s) box type *National Probate*. Click the *England & Wales, National Probate Calendar*.....
3. When you find your ancestor, record the probate court and the probate date in order to find the original will.

www.gov.uk/search-will-probate – Free indexes from 1858-to the present; \$ Original wills from 1858-to the present, can be ordered from this site for a fee.

1. Click Start now.
2. Search by time period, surname, and year of death.

BURIAL RECORDS: (Beginning in 1538)

In 1538 England began keeping parish registers which included baptisms, marriages, and burials. Copies of these registers were made each year and sent to the bishop. These are called bishop's transcripts. The burial record was recorded by the church and reflects the burial date, not the date of death. Beginning in 1812 burials were kept on a separate printed form.

Finding Burial Records:

www.familysearch.org

Records search

1. Go to *Search*, then click *Records*.
2. On the map, click Great Britain, then click *England*.
3. Scroll down and look for the County where your ancestor came from and click *Parish registers*.
4. Click on *Burials*.

Catalog search

1. Go to *Search*, then click *Catalog*
2. In the *Places* search, type the name of the parish where your ancestor died, followed by the County.
3. Click *Church records* (Note: They may be digitized and available online. 📷 Click one of the options near the film number).

Burials can also be found on the following websites:

- www.ancestry.com
- www.findmypast.co.uk
- www.freereg.org.uk

Content:

- Name of deceased.
- Date of burial.
- After 1812 may include the age, place of residence, cause of death, occupation, status, and name of a parent if a burial of a child.

MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS: (Beginning from the 1600s)

Monumental inscriptions, or tombstones, may be useful in providing birth, marriage, and death information. These are the inscriptions written on the tombstones. They may contain more family information than the burial record or death certificate.

Finding Monumental Inscriptions:

www.familysearch.org

1. Go to *Search*, then click *Catalog*.
2. In the *Places* search, type the name of the parish where your ancestor died, followed by the County.
3. Click *Cemeteries* (if available), then click the *Monumental Inscriptions*. (Note: They may be digitized and available online. 📷 Click one of the options near the film number).

www.findmypast.co.uk

1. Go to *Search*, then click *A-Z of records sets*.
2. In the Search box type "*Monumental*."
3. Click the desired record.

A few Monumental Inscriptions can also be found on the following websites:

- www.familysearch.org (Historical Records Collection)
- www.ancestry.com
- Google "England Monumental Inscriptions"

Content:

- Name and age of deceased.
- Description of the headstone.
- May include the date of death, cause of death, occupation, marital status, names of parents, and other genealogical information.

ESTATE OR DEATH DUTY REGISTERS: (1796-1903)

An act in 1796 that required that duty or a tax be paid on all bequests and succession to property over a certain value. If your ancestor left a will or an administration, they should also have a death duty record. These records can be more detailed than the actual will or administration, even naming family members not mentioned in the will.

Finding Estate or Death Duty Records:

www.findmypast.co.uk

1. Go to *Search*, then click *A-Z of records sets*.
2. In the Search box type *Duty*.
3. Click *Index to Death Duty Registers 1796-1903*.

Finding original images of the Estate or Death Duty Records:

www.familysearch.org – (pre-1858)

1. Go to *Search*, then click *Catalog*.
2. In the *Keyword* search type *Death Duty*.

Content:

- Name, address & occupation of the deceased
- Date and place of death and date of probate
- Names of heirs and their relationship to the deceased, even if not mentioned in the will
- May include the residences or death of heirs
- Names, addresses, occupations of the executors
- Details of estates and related matters, Amount of the duty paid.

3. Based on the court named in the index click the appropriate link. Click on one of the options near the Film number.

DEATH CERTIFICATES: (Beginning July 1837)

Beginning July 1, 1837, the English government began recording birth, marriage, and death certificates. Death certificates generally do not give birth information or the names of parents, with the exception for young children.

Finding Indexes to the Death Certificates:

www.familysearch.org

1. Go to *Search*, then click *Records*.
2. On the map, click Great Britain, then click *England*.
3. Click *England and Wales Death Registration Index, 1837-2007*.
4. Indexes are also found on the following websites:
 - www.freebmd.org.uk
 - www.ukbmd.org.uk
 - www.ancestry.com
 - www.findmypast.co.uk

Content:

- Name and age of deceased, Date and cause of death.
- Occupation of the deceased
- Marital status of deceased
- Date and place the death was registered
- Signature, qualification, and residence of the informant.

Finding Original Death Certificates:

www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/ – Original Death Certificates must be ordered from England.

1. Click *Order certificates online*, then click the *Search the GRO historical birth and death indexes...* and then the *Register/Login* link.
2. Click the *GRO indexes* to search. To order the certificate, *click the Order a certificate/PDF*. After paying, the certificate will be sent to your email.

CEMETERY REGISTERS: (Began in the 1850s)

Before the mid-1800s, most people were buried in churchyards. Each parish church had their own cemetery. The Industrial Revolution brought an increase in population to the cities resulting in the creation of public cemeteries outside of the churchyards. These cemeteries kept registers of those buried and may have recorded grave plots and other records.

Finding Cemetery Registers:

- www.deceasedonline.com
- www.interment.net/uk/index.htm
- www.familysearch.org
- www.ancestry.com

Content:

- Name of the deceased, Residence of deceased
- Date of burial
- Age of deceased
- By whom ceremony was performed
- Grave reference/location
- Cemetery name

NEWSPAPERS:

Newspapers can be a rich source of information for finding information about your ancestor's death. They can include obituaries, death notices, or give other information regarding your ancestor's death.

Finding English newspapers:

- www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk – Subscription website.
- www.familysearch.org/search – Has access to the Britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk obituaries and family notices.
 1. Go to the FamilySearch website.
 2. Scroll down to *Find a Collection*, under the world map, and in the search box type "British newspaper."

Content:

- Name and age of deceased.
- Date and cause of death.
- Family relationships.
- Detailed information about the death.